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DISCOURSE
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Divine Providence :

Occasion'd by

The DEMISE of Her Late
MAJESTY

QUEEN ANNE,

A N D

The Happy ACCESSION of our
Present SOVEREIGN,

KING GEORGE,

To the Throne of *Great Britain, &c.*

By BENJAMIN STINTON. *K*

The Second Edition.

L O N D O N,

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DISCOURSE

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Divine Providence, &c.

DANIEL II. 20, 21.

Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the Name of God for ever and ever : for Wisdom and Might are his.

And he changeth the Times and the Seasons : he removeth Kings, and setteth up Kings : he giveth Wisdom unto the Wise, and Knowledge to them that know Understanding.

IT is well observ'd by a great Divine *, " That next
 " to the Acknowledgment of God's Being, nothing
 " is more essential to Religion, than the Belief
 " of his Providence, and a constant Dependence
 " upon him, as the great Governour of the World, and
 " the wise Disposer of all the Affairs and Concernments
 " of the Children of Men." And this Notion is just :
 for tho Men believe that there is a God, yet if they

* Dr. Tillotson on Eccles. 11. 2.

imagine him above taking notice of human Affairs, or concerning himself about the Happiness or Misery of Mankind; what Motives can such have to pay Divine Worship to him, or of being careful always to do those things that please him? If God did not preside over and govern all things below by his wise and good Providence, but left them to go on according to the Course of Nature, or Effect of Chance; it would be in vain to pray to him for Deliverance under Troubles, or Success in our Affairs; or to acknowledg him the Author of any Happiness enjoy'd by us. The Denial therefore of a Providence takes away the two Essential Parts of Natural Religion, Prayer and Praise.

It is also the Consideration of a Divine Providence, that supports the Mind of a good Man under all the Troubles and Disappointments that he meets with; and renders him contented with his Condition and Circumstances in this World, whatever they be. He who believes that God rules the World, cannot but conclude, that he governs in Righteousness, and directeth all things after the best manner; so that no Man can have cause to complain of Providence, if that which is right and best will please him. To acknowledg that God does it, and yet to dislike and murmur at what is done, must be both impious and foolish. We have all reason to seek the Amendment of our selves; but who will presume to correct the Almighty, or find fault with his Conduct? A Child of God knows and considers, that his heavenly Father takes care of him, and has in his hand the Government and Direction of all things that befall him. And as this is the best reason for Quietness and Contentment, so it cannot but be a great Comfort to him, as well under present Afflictions, as the Apprehension of those at a distance: For it is natural to conclude from hence, that God will prevent the Evils he fears, if that be best for him; or if he suffers them to come, he will support him under them; and direct them, in the Issue, either to his Advantage in this World, or the Increase of his Happiness in the next.

A Discourse of Divine Providence.

next. And can any thing contribute more to the Relief and Comfort of a Man's Mind, under all the Changes and Afflictions to which he is liable, than the Belief and Consideration of these things? So that the best Motive to the Fear and Worship of God, and the strongest Arguments for Peace and Contentment of Mind, are founded upon the Doctrine of Divine Providence.

And so admirably well is this Doctrine fitted to promote Piety and Religion, that tho it gives all this Relief and Comfort to the Mind of a good Man, yet it administers none at all to those that are Bad; for how can they expect his Favour and Protection, who provoke him to Anger daily, and live in a constant Disobedience to his Will? Whereas the Stoical Notion of Fate, sets the Wicked and the Righteous upon a level.

I may add, That there is no accounting for uncommon and supernatural Events, for those great and unexpected Revolutions that have sometimes happen'd in the World, but by the Acknowledgment of a Divine Providence. The ordinary Course of Nature has been often interrupted, and Second Causes have frequently fail'd of producing their usual and ordinary Effects; and for this no tolerable Reason can be given, but that there must be some Being superiour to these, who governs and rules them, and interposes when he pleases to alter their Course, and bring to pass things most improbable and unexpected. And what must this be, but the secret and over-ruling Providence of Almighty God? or who can assign any thing else like a Reason for it?

We may observe, that the most Healthy and Strong do not always live the longest; that the most numerous and best-disciplin'd Army does not always gain the Victory; that the most probable and best-laid Schemes do not always succeed: but that things frequently come to pass contrary to expectation, and the proper Means that have been used. Such Changes have been made

6 *A Discourse of Divine Providence.*

made in Mens Affairs and Dispositions, and such Revolutions have happen'd in Communities and Kingdoms, as could not have been effected by any human Means or natural Causes. If things went on constantly in the same Course, and second Causes always attain'd their End, without the least Variation or Interruption; there might be some shew of Reason to think there was no Being superior to Nature, but that every thing came to pass by Chance and blind Necessity; and so might exclude the thought of God and Religion from the Minds of Men. *Because they have no Changes, saith the Psalmist, therefore they fear not God **.

But when we see Nature so often interrupted in its Course, and such wonderful Revolutions brought about, which could not have been the Effect of any human Skill or Power: It is sufficient to convince us, both of the Being of God, and of his Providence, and should lead us to bless his Name, and adore his Wisdom and Power, who thus governs and directs all things here below.

We find this was the use that the Prophet *Daniel* made of those signal Appearances of a Divine Providence that were seen in his days; and particularly, that which occasion'd the words of our Text. King *Nebuchadnezzar* had dream'd a Dream which gave him a very great uneasiness: Upon which, he calls together the wise Men of his Country, commanding them to tell him, both the Dream and the Interpretation thereof. They being incapable of doing this, the King, in a great Rage, signs a Commission for putting to death all the wise Men in *Babylon*, of which number was *Daniel* and some of his Brethren. But God, who over-rules all human Affairs, and restrains or turns the Power and Will of Princes as he pleases, did, in an extraordinary manner, interpose to save his People the *Jews*. He reveals to *Daniel*, in a Vision of the Night, what the King had dream'd, and how he should interpret

* Psal. 55. 19.

A Discourse of Divine Providence. 7

it: This occasion'd a very sudden and wonderful Change, both at the Court, and thro-out the whole Kingdom. *Daniel* and his Brethren have not only their Lives spar'd, but, to the great mortification of their Enemies, are advanc'd to the highest Honour and Esteem; and tho, by wicked Laws, Idolatry had been establish'd in the Nation, now the true God is acknowledg'd, and his People have for some time liberty to worship him.

Daniel being greatly affected with the Goodness of God, in appearing so seasonably to vindicate his own Honour, and save his People, expresses his Joy and Thankfulness in the words of our Text: *Blessed be the Name of God for ever and ever, for Wisdom and Might are his: And he changeth the Times and the Seasons; he removeth Kings, and setteth up Kings; he giveth Wisdom to the Wise, and Knowledg to them that know Understanding.*

In speaking to these words, I shall endeavour,

- I. To explain and illustrate the several important Truths that are asserted in them.
- II. Shew you how applicable the Instances here given of the Wisdom and Power of God, are to our present Times and Circumstances. And,
- III. Make some practical Inferences from the whole.

I. We shall take a short View of those important Truths which are asserted in these words, and observe the admirable Order in which the inspir'd Prophet lays them down.

In the former of these Verses, he ascribes Wisdom and Power to God, and blesses his Name upon the account of these his Divine Perfections.

In the latter, he gives some particular Instances of God's Wisdom and Power, as manifested in the Course of his Providence; declaring, That 'tis *he that changeth Times and Seasons; that removeth Kings, and setteth up Kings; and that inspireth with Wisdom and Knowledg all*
who

who are adorn'd with those excellent Accomplishments. And certainly he who does all this, must be a Being of infinite Understanding and unlimited Power.

And this Order leads me, in the first place, to discourse of the Wisdom and Power of God; not with respect to the Creation of the World, and all things in it, out of nothing; or the Redemption of Mankind by the Blood of Christ; in both of which these Divine Perfections have been most admirably display'd: but as they relate to a Divine Providence, and render God the most worthy and fit to govern the World, and to order and dispose of every thing in it.

Wisdom and Might are his. He has Wisdom to contrive and form the most excellent Designs, and to dispose of every thing after the best manner; and he has Power to effect whatsoever he pleases, and accomplish all things that he sees necessary or fit to be done.

He knows all things that have been, that are, or that shall be hereafter; so that he cannot be surpriz'd by any Accident which he did not foresee, or is not sufficiently provided against.

He knows the secret Springs of Nature, and the Causes of all Events; he is acquainted with the Nature, Power and Influences of all his Creatures, and therefore can never be mistaken in the application he makes of them to any of his Purposes.

He has a perfect and intire View of all Objects at once, so that nothing can escape his particular and exact Notice. There are none of his Creatures thro-out the whole Universe, but he knows all their Wants, and how to supply them; all their Desires, and how to satisfy them; all their Fears and Dangers, and how to prevent them. He knows the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart, and enters into the most secret Counsels and Designs of Men; and can turn all their Wisdom into Foolishness, and bring to nought all Contrivances that are against his Will; *for there is no Wisdom, nor Understanding, nor Counsel against the Lord*.*

* Prov. 21. 30.

He knows the possibility of things, and how to fit Means to any End that he proposes; so that it is impossible he should be guilty of any Error, or that any of his gracious Designs should miscarry, either for want of good Contrivance or wise Conduct *.

He knows the properest times of extending Mercy to his Creatures, and of saving them out of their Danger and Distresses; and what Methods of Salvation will conduce most to his Glory, and the Happiness of those who love and fear him.

In a word, he is of infinite Understanding; and as he is the Supreme Governor of the World, we may depend upon it, that every thing is order'd and dispos'd after the best and wisest manner.

But Wisdom alone is not sufficient for the Preservation and Government of a particular Nation, much less of the whole Universe. The most extensive Knowledge, and the best-form'd Contrivances will avail little, where there is a Defect of Power: therefore when the Divine Prophet sets forth the Excellencies of the Supreme Governor, he says, that both *Wisdom and Might are his*. He has Power to execute, as well as Wisdom to direct; and the Holy Scriptures frequently stile him *The Almighty*, because he has an infinite Power, and there is nothing too hard for him. Some things are difficult to us, other things are impossible with us; *but with God all things are possible* †. He is able to execute whatsoever he designs, to fulfil whatsoever he promises, and to inflict whatsoever he has threaten'd. When he willeth any thing, it is presently done; when he speaks but the word, it instantly comes to pass: No Difficulties can obstruct his Operation, nor is there any Enemy that can be a Match for him: *He is wise in Heart, and mighty in Strength; who hath harden'd himself against him, and hath prosper'd* ||? All good things are at his Command, and all evil things are under his Direction. We cannot be reduc'd to such

* See Dr. Tillotson on the 73d Psalm, ver. 25.

† Mat. 19. 26.

|| Job 9. 4.

straits, in which he is not able to help and relieve us, nor expos'd to such Enemies, from whose Malice he cannot protect and save us; neither can we be under such Sufferings and Afflictions, wherein he will not be able to support and strengthen us, and when he sees fit work out a Deliverance for us: *Happy therefore, is he that hath the God of Jacob for his Help, whose Hope is in the Lord his God **; for he is great in Counsel, and mighty in Working †.

We may also observe, That when the Prophet ascribes these two Perfections to God, he doth not express it by saying, he is Wise and Mighty, but that *Wisdom and Might are his*: by which is intimated, that these Perfections are in God after the most eminent manner, and in the highest degree; that he does not, as Creatures, derive them from any other, but that they are his own Being and Essence.

Our Knowledg is gotten by diligent Study and *fore Travail*, and is easily lost again by the Defect of Memory, or Age; neither can we exert our Strength to any great Purposes, without some Pain, and weakning to our selves: But both Wisdom and Power are easy to God; they are in him, and exercis'd by him without Labour and Difficulty, and are always present and actual.

We know but a few things, and these only after a slight and superficial manner; 'tis still less that we are able to perform, our Power being more defective than our Understanding, and *that || which is wanting, cannot be number'd*. But the Wisdom and Power of God are universal, extending to all Objects and all Purposes whatsoever; so that nothing can escape his Knowledg, or exceed his Power.

Again, whatever Wisdom and Power is found in any created Beings, 'tis not their own, they deriv'd it from God who gave them their Beings; they are dependent on him both for the Continuance and Exercise of it, and to him alone must they be accountable

* Psal. 146. 5.

† Jer. 32. 19.

|| Eccl. 1. 15.

for those excellent Gifts : So that it can only be said of the first and supreme Being, *Wisdom and Might are his.*

From this general View of the Wisdom and Power of God, let us proceed, with the Prophet in our Text, to consider those particular Instances which he gives of them in the Government of this World.

And the first is, that *he changeth the Times and the Seasons.* By which may be intended, either the natural and constant Alterations of Time and Seasons, as Days and Nights, Winter and Summer ; or those extraordinary Revolutions in human Affairs, which have frequently happen'd in several Ages and Kingdoms of the World. Those who by this understand the former, *viz.* the several Periods of Time, and the natural Alteration of Seasons, suppose that the Prophet design'd, by these words, to ascribe that to God, which the Heathens attributed only to Nature or Chance. 'Tis plain indeed, that Time is measur'd by the heavenly Orbs, and the Seasons alter according to their different Course and Influence. The Diurnal Motion of the Sun from East to West, causes the constant Revolution of Day and Night ; and its annual Motion between the North and South, occasions the Difference of Climates, the Inequality of Days and Nights, and the Variety of Seasons : And according to the different Conjunction or Opposition of the Planets, the Weather proves hotter or colder, healthful or sickly, dry or rainy. But we must look above all these second Causes to the first and chief Agent, to that God who made all these things by his Power, and continues to govern and direct their Motions and Influences by his wise Providence.

He at first created the Sun, Moon, and Stars, and plac'd them in the Heavens *for Signs and for Seasons, and for Days and Years* *. And 'tis he who directs their Motions, and gives them their Influence. Without his Power and Providence, they would soon alter

* Gen. 1. 14.

their Position, lose their Influence, or cease from their regular and constant Motions; any of which would throw the whole Universe into the utmost Confusion. *He, saith the Psalmist, appointeth the Moon for Seasons, and the Sun knoweth his going down; the Day is thine, the Night also is thine; thou hast made the Summer and the Winter* *. The God of Nature has the Power and Government of all these things in his own hand, and either continues them in their fix'd Order, or stops and alters their Course as he pleases: He can make the Sun to stand still, as he did in *Joshua's* time; or cause it to go backward, as he did on *Ahaz's* Dial. And 'tis no small Instance of his Wisdom and Power, that he over-rules and directs all these Motions and Variations, so as to preserve the World, and to supply all his Creatures both with the Necessaries and Comforts of Life. Let us therefore, in all these things, acknowledge his supreme Agency, and ascribe to him the Glory of them; *for it is he who changeth the Times and the Seasons.*

But the other Interpretation seems more agreeable both to the Design of the Prophet, and the Connection of these words; namely, that God is the Author of those wonderful Revolutions which frequently happen in Kingdoms and Nations, whereby there is a great alteration made in the Times, and an unexpected turn given to human Affairs.

The preceding Verses give us an Account, that God had reveal'd, in a Vision, to his Servant *Daniel*, what wonderful Changes and Revolutions should come to pass in future Times: That one Monarch should be remov'd, and another set up; one Kingdom destroy'd, and another erected out of its Ruins; and one Overturning continue to follow after another, until he comes whose Right it is. Upon this he blesteth the Name of God, and says, *Wisdom and Might are his, and he changeth the Times and the Seasons*; i. e. all these Turnings are over-rul'd and directed by God for his

* Psal. 104. 19. & 74. 16.

own Glory, and to bring about his gracious Designs. To whom must we ascribe those wonderful Changes and surprizing Revolutions that are recorded both in Sacred and Profane Histories, but God, who by his Wisdom and Power governs the World, and over-rules all things that come to pass in it?

The *Jews* were a People more peculiarly under the Government and Protection of God, than any other Nation in the World, and yet what great and frequent Revolutions happen'd in the State and Circumstances of that People: One while they are Slaves and Bondmen in *Egypt*; at another time, they possess and are the sole Lords of one of the most pleasant and fruitful Countries of the Earth. One while we find the true Religion to flourish amongst them, and they enjoy Peace and Prosperity: At other times, Idolatry prevails, evil Kings are set over them, and they are almost ruin'd by Divisions and Contentions amongst themselves. Now they are Victorious over their Enemies, and no Nation or Kingdom in the World dare lift up the Hand, or wage War against them: Soon after they are for their Sins carry'd into Captivity, and made to serve their Enemies, in Hunger and Nakedness, and the want of all things. Now all this came not to pass by Fortune or Chance, neither by any human Power or Conduct only, but by the wise Providence of God, that over-rules and directs all things for his own Glory; and either does, or permits *whatsoever he pleaseth in Heaven and in Earth, and in all deep places.*

'Tis he who destroys one Kingdom, and sets up another; who gives to one Nation Health and Prosperity, and a Plenty of all things, and visits another with Sword or Famine, or Pestilential Diseases: 'tis he who confounds the Devices of the Wicked, overthrows the Power of Tyrants, and saves a People designed and prepared for Destruction. He can make Bad times Good, or turn our Blessings into Curses. If we live in an Evil time, God can soon make an Alteration in our favour, if we seek to him, and serve him with all our
Hearts:

Hearts: If, on the other hand, we see good Days, and enjoy Prosperity and a Plenty of all things, he can, being provok'd to it by our Sins, bring a sudden turn upon us, and either strip us of all our comfortable Injoyments, or cause them to be no real Blessing or Happiness to us. *He has all our times in his hand* *, and he lengthens or shortens them, makes them Good or Evil to us, as he pleaseth: and therefore the Prophet might truly say, *He changeth the Times and the Seasons.*

2. The second Instance of the Wisdom and Power of God is, that *he removeth Kings and setteth up Kings.* He has Authority and Dominion over all earthly Monarchs, and superintends all their Power and Actions. It is therefore frequently asserted in the Holy Scriptures, *That he is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; that by him Kings reign, and Princes decree Judgment; and that there is no Power but what is of God.* All the Great and Mighty as well as the Petty Princes of the Earth, are but Vicegerents and Deputies under the Almighty: and as a Prince may remove his Officers at pleasure, and take away their Commissions from them; so God puts in and removes from these Posts of Honour and Power whom he pleases; and he who wears a Crown, is as much subject to the Power and Providence of God, as he who is clothed in Rags.

And when the Prophet saith, *He removeth Kings,* it may be understood, either of his divesting them of their Power and Authority while they live, or of his taking them out of the World by Death.

Sometimes the Wisdom and Power of Divine Providence appears in divesting Kings of their Power and Government while they live: he frequently removes them from the Throne, when he does not take them out of the World. I shall mention two Instances of this kind, that I think worthy our Observation, the one very antient, and the other within our own Memory.

The former is that of King *Nebuchadnezzar*, who was made a very remarkable Example of this kind. His

* Psal. 31. 15.

Power, when upon the Throne, was exceeding great ; for he attain'd to an Universal Empire, and none upon Earth dared to controul him, as appears by the words of *Daniel* : *It is thou, O King, that art grown and become strong ; for thy Greatness is grown and reacheth unto Heaven, and thy Dominion unto the ends of the Earth **. And yet God made him know, that he was not an absolute and independent Sovereign, but that there was one greater than him, who could dispossess him at pleasure, and take his Kingdom from him : *O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The Kingdom is departed from thee ; and they shall drive thee from Men ; and thy Dwelling shall be with the Beasts of the Field ; they shall make thee to eat Grass as Oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou shalt know that the most High rulerth over the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And the same Hour, says the Text, was the thing fulfilled †*.

The other Instance, which, as I said, happen'd in our own Time, is of a Prince that not long since sat upon the *British Throne*||. He attempted the Subversion of our Laws, the Restoration of Popery, and to enslave us to a Foreign Prince, and an Arbitrary Power : And that he might not want means for the accomplishment of all this, Officers fitted for his Design were put into the chiefeft places of Power ; an Army is rais'd in his own Dominions, and an Alliance form'd with one of the most powerful Nations in *Europe*.

But God, by his Divine Providence, was graciously pleas'd to interpose in our favour at this critical Juncture, and cause such a happy Revolution as ought never to be forgotten. *The Kingdom was taken from him, not by the Wisdom of Man, or an Arm of Flesh ; but by the mighty Power of God. And tho human Means were used, yet it plainly appeared these of themselves were far short of effecting that glorious Change.*

Who, but God, fill'd the King's Heart with Fear and Terror ? infatuat'd his Counsels, and dispirited his Soldiers ? and brought in our happy Deliverer without

* *Dan. 4. 22.* † *Ch. 4. 31, 32, 33.* || *The unhappy K. James II.*
shedding

shedding of Blood, or making the least Breach in our happy Constitution? *Not unto us therefore, not unto us, but unto his Name be the Praise and the Glory.*

The other sense given of this Phrase, *He removeth Kings*, is, that he taketh them out of the World by Death: for this removes them from all their Power and Honour, and puts a stop to all their Designs and Actions. The King is as subject to Death as the Beggar; and the Throne can no more secure from the Grave than the meanest Cottage: *For the Small and the Great are there, and the Servant is free from his Master.* And the Psalmist advises us, *Not to put our Trust in Princes, nor in the Son of Man, in whom there is no help.* And the Reason assigned, is, because *his Breath goeth forth, he returneth to his Earth, in that very Day his Thoughts perish* *. Now we know that Death is but the Executioner of God's Will, and those that are removed by it, are therefore said *to be taken away by his Stroke* †.

And indeed there is usually a very great appearance of God's Hand in the Death of Princes, which ought to be observed and acknowledged by us. If they were Tyrants and Oppressors of their People, the Removal of them is to be looked upon as a favourable Providence, and a Mercy from God to those that were under their Government; as all Protestants will acknowledg the Death of that bloody Persecutor, *Q. Mary*, was. If they ruled in Righteousness, and made their Subjects a free and happy People, then their Removal must be esteemed a great Affliction, and grievous Judgment from God upon a Nation: And we have not been without some Instances of this nature in *England*, tho we are not always sensible of it when the Stroke is first given.

And as God must be acknowledg'd to have the chief hand in removing Kings, so likewise his special Providence is often discover'd in setting of them up.

Sometimes the particular Person that shall reign is marked out by the Almighty, and the People directed and inclined to him after an unusual manner, as in the Case of *Saul*.

* Psal. 146. 3, 4.

† Job 36. 18. Ezek. 24. 16.

Sometimes we may observe a strange Train of Providences concurring to the Advancement of a Person to the Throne; and what at first seemed the most improbable and unlikely, does at length become the most reasonable and necessary: As in the case of *David*, who from the Sheepfold was advanced to the Throne of *Israel*.

Sometimes the Divine Providence is made very conspicuous, by confounding those Schemes and Devices that were form'd, to prevent the designed Successor, and in overthrowing his open Enemies; as in the Case of *Solomon*. So that we may truly say with the Psalmist, *Promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South; but God is the Judge, he pulleth down one and setteth up another* *.

3. The third and last Instance mentioned in our Text, of the Wisdom and Power of God, is, *That he giveth Wisdom to the Wise, and Knowledge to them that know Understanding*. And this is as full a Confirmation of what the Prophet had asserted concerning the Divine Majesty, as any of the former; namely, *That Wisdom and Might are his*. For he must certainly be infinitely Wise, from whom all that Wisdom and Knowledge found in created Beings is derived: And he must have an unlimited Power over human Affairs, who directs and governs all the wise Men and Counsellors of the Earth by his Inspiration.

And that God does this, is evident beyond all Contradiction: he that hath given us our Beings, must necessarily be the Author of all the Powers and Faculties that belong to our Natures. To suppose any Wisdom or Knowledge in Men that is not first in God and derived from him, is to make the Creature independent, than which nothing can be more absurd and foolish. *There is a Spirit in Man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth them Understanding* †. The Faculties of knowing and reasoning were at first given to Men by the Inspiration of the Almighty ||; and all the Knowledge they attain by the use of these intellectual Powers, is from

* Psal. 75. 6, 7.

† Job 32. 8.

|| Gen. 2. 7.

the Influence and Blessing of God upon them: *He giveth unto a Man, that is good in his sight, Wisdom, and Knowledge, and Joy* *. And upon special Occasions he has, by immediate Revelation, given Men that Knowledge which they could not have attained by the Improvement of their natural Abilities. *For Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man; but holy Men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* †.

'Tis He who gives to Men the Knowledge of Nature: To understand the Works of God, and be acquainted with the Powers and Influence both of heavenly and earthly Bodies, is very pleasant and useful. *Solomon had a large share of this Knowledge; His Wisdom excelled the Wisdom of the Children of the East Country, and all the Wisdom of Egypt* ||. But the Scriptures declare, that this was one of those special Gifts wherewith God was pleased to honour that Prince.

'Tis by Him also that Men are furnished with Mechanical Knowledge, or that Skill whereby they perform their several Arts, and produce such excellent Pieces of Workmanship as are sometimes perform'd by them. ||| *I Wisdom dwell with Prudence, and find out the knowledge of witty Inventions; i. e.* The Divine Wisdom inspires Men with Discretion to manage their Affairs, and gives them the Skill to find out many profitable and ingenious Arts.

And more especially, 'tis God who favours Men with Divine Wisdom; that Wisdom that concerns their spiritual and eternal Happiness, and makes them wise to Salvation, through Faith in Christ Jesus. This, by way of Eminency, is called *the Wisdom that is from above* **: and those who are sensible of their want of it, and desire to be supplied, are directed to ask it of God, *who giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not* ††.

But it is civil or political Wisdom which seems to be chiefly intended in our Text: that Wisdom that the Counsellors and Governors of a Nation stand in need

* Eccles. 2. 26.

† 2 Pet. 1. 21.

|| 1 Kings 4. 29, 30.

||| Prov. 8. 12.

** James 3. 17.

†† Ch. 1. 5.

of; especially when publick Changes happen, and one Prince is removed and another set up. 'Tis God who puts good Designs and Resolutions into the Hearts of Kings and great Men *; 'tis He that teacheth Counsellors, *and gives unto Senators Wisdom* †. As God is a Spirit every where present, he must be intimate to the Souls of Men, and have secret and powerful ways, whereby to convey Thoughts and Designs into their Hearts, and to sway their Wills and Affections as he pleaseth. *The King's Heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the Rivers of Water, he turneth it whithersoever he will* ||. And if the Senators of any Nation have the Skill to make wise and prudent Laws for the preservation of their Civil and Religious Privileges; if they have Penetration enough to find out the Plots and evil Designs of their Enemies, and thereby prevent the Overthrow and Ruin of a Kingdom; if they have Understanding to direct and manage Publick Affairs, so as to preserve all things in Peace and Safety under the greatest Changes and Alterations: to God must we chiefly ascribe the Glory of all these things; for *it is he who giveth Wisdom to the Wise, and Knowledge to them that know Understanding.*

We may observe also, that the Prophet distinguishes in our Text betwixt Wisdom and Knowledge: And indeed there is a real difference, tho they are frequently used in Scripture, for Elegancy, to signify the same thing. When apply'd to God, they sometimes denote two distinct Perfections in the Divine Being: *O the depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God*, saith the Apostle |||. They are also mentioned as two different Attainments in Men: *To one is given by the Spirit, the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge by the same Spirit.*

Knowledge signifies the right understanding of things, as they are in their own nature: Wisdom, the right use of the things known, according to their fitness or un-

* Ezra 7. 27.

† Psal. 105. 22.

|| Prov. 21. 1.

||| Rom. 11. 33.

fitness, for various purposes; so that the former relates only to Speculation, and the latter to Practice: The one consists in having a right Notion of things in our Minds; the other in making a right Use and Application of them. So that it is one thing to have Knowledg, and another thing to be really wise: but they both descend from above, and are wrought in Men by the Spirit of God: *For he giveth Wisdom to the Wise, and Knowledg to them that know Understanding.* Having given this particular Explication of the several Parts of our Text, I proceed,

II. In the next place, to shew you how applicable these Instances of the Power and Wisdom of God, are to our present Times and Circumstances. What the Prophet here ascribes to God's Power and Agency, we have, in our Days, seen him perform by his Providence: and you cannot but have observed something of this from what has already been said; but a more particular and distinct applying of them to our own times, may be very necessary and acceptable.

And I cannot do this better, than by observing to you,

That the State of Affairs in this Nation has lately received a very great and surprizing Change.

That this Change has been chiefly occasioned by the removing of one Prince from the Throne, and setting up another.

That our Governors have discover'd a great degree of Wisdom and Understanding, both in providing for this Succession, and managing things for the publick Peace and Safety when it took place.

And under each of these Heads I shall shew, how all must be ascribed to the wise and powerful Providence of God, *who removeth and setteth up Kings, and who giveth Wisdom to the Wise, and Knowledg to Men of Understanding.*

1st then, You cannot but have observ'd that the State of Affairs in this Kingdom has lately receiv'd a very great and unexpected Turn: And if we look back

a little to the Posture of Affairs a few Months since, and compare them with the present State of Things, the Greatness of this Change will be very visible to us.

So bad was our Condition, that a great Prelate thought it not improper to compare it with the miserable Circumstances we were in before that happy Revolution in 1688.

“ It may not be an improper Attempt (says that great Statesman, as well as Divine) to try once more to awaken a Nation that has perhaps forgot past Dangers, and yet may be nearer them than ever. If there is any Difference between the present State of Things, and that we were in about thirty Years ago, it is that we are now more naked and defenceless, more insensible and stupid, and much more deprav’d in all respects than we were then. — Many are barefacedly going back to that Misery, from which God with such a mighty Hand rescu’d us, and has hitherto preserv’d us with an amazing Chain of happy Providences *.”

Many who refus’d to take the Oaths of Allegiance to the late King *William*, and were therefore suspected of favouring the Interest of the Impostor, were advanc’d to Places of great Honour and Trust. The Doctrine of an Indefeasible Hereditary Right was publickly vindicated, both in Addresses to her Majesty, and Books dispers’d among the People; and the Alliance made to secure the Protestant Succession, was in the greatest danger of being broken †. Some of the worst Parts

* *Bishop Burnet’s Introduction to his 3d Volume, p. 28.*

† *Hague, June 19. In the Conference which the Earl of Strafford had the 16th of May with the Deputies of this State, concerning their Negotiation with the Emperor about the Spanish Netherlands, his Excellency intimated, That the Queen judg’d that the States ought not to treat of that Affair without her Concurrence, considering the Engagements into which their High Mightinesses enter’d with her by the Treaty of Barrier (by which the States are made Guarantees of the Protestant Succession) and that her Majesty would look upon herself to be free from these Engagements, if this Commonwealth should proceed in that Negotiation separately. Daily Courant of June 14. 1714.*

of Popery were reviv'd, and zealously promoted by several of the Clergy; and others had the Impudence to propose a Coalition between the *Gallican* and *English* Churches †. And the better to carry on these Designs, the Spirit of Envy and Persecution was reviv'd amongst the People; and those Incroachments that were made upon the Act of Toleration ||, caus'd some to fear, and others to hope, that in a little time it would be wholly taken away: And the more Zealous were hereby encourag'd to threaten the Dissenters with the demolishing of their Places of Worship, driving their Teachers into Corners, and banishing out of the Land all that dar'd to dissent from their Church.

So fast did the Interest of Popery and the Pretender grow in *England*, and such reason was there to fear their Attempts upon us, that the House of Lords thought it necessary to address her Majesty to issue out a Proclamation, promising a Reward to any that should bring the Pretender to Justice, in case he either landed, or attempted to land, in any of her Maje-

† But what can be said of those who are already going into some of the worst Parts of Popery? It is well known, that in Practice, the Necessity of Auricular Confession, and the Priestly Absolution, with the Conceit of the Sacrifice of the Mass, are the most gainful Parts of Popery, and are indeed those that do most effectually subdue the World to it. The Independency of the Church on the State is also contended for, as if it were on design to disgrace our Reformation. The indispensable Necessity of the Priesthood to all sacred Functions, is carry'd in the Point of Baptism further than Popery; their Devotions are openly recommended, and a Union with the *Gallican Church* has been impudently propos'd. Bishop Burnet's Introduction to his 3d Volume, pag. 70.

|| 'Tis true, many of us oppos'd the Occasional Bill, from which such great things were expected. We thought there were ill Designs under it; we thought it ill-tim'd; we look'd on it as tending to a Breach of the Toleration. Burnet's Preface to Pastoral Care.

This Act (to prevent the Growth of Schism) therefore, in a stealing and too artful manner, takes away the Toleration of Dissenters; for the force of it is directed to take place in confirmation of a Law, which they are expressly defended against by the said Act of Toleration. Steele's Letter concerning the Bill for preventing the Growth of Schism, pag. 10.

ty's Dominions. And in an Address from the same House soon after, the dangerous Condition we were then in was represented to her Majesty, in these words: " And since the Papists and Nonjurors are so insolent, " as not only to support the Pretender's Claim to " your Royal Crown by their Writings and Discour- " ses, but also traitorously to enlist Men into his Ser- " vice, and send them to *France*; we most humbly " beseech your Majesty to issue out your Proclama- " tion, &c. *"

And many true Patriots of our Country, as well in Church as State, had the Courage to give us Warning †, and represent our great Danger to us; assuring us that our Civil and Religious Privileges were just expiring, if God, by some special Providence, did not save || us: tho all that did thus, were sure of being publicly discountenanc'd.

But now what a happy Turn is given to all these things? and how wonderfully does the Scene of Affairs begin to change? Those from whom we thought our selves in most danger, are either remov'd, or have the power of doing Mischief taken from them; the Publick Credit is retriev'd; the Enemies of the Protestant Succession dare not shew themselves; the Hopes of Persecutors are turn'd into Despair, and the once Grand Supporter of Popery and Tyranny dares not lift up his Hand, or give any Countenance openly to the Mock-King: In a word, *The Hearts of the Righteous are made glad, but the Wicked are fill'd with Fear and Shame.*

I cannot forbear mentioning a Passage here, out of a celebrated Divine, who treating of the Power and Providence of God, and shewing how he manifests his Dominion over all Human Affairs, has these Words:

* *The Address of the House of Lords to her Majesty, June 24. 1714.*

† Burnet's Introduction, pag 71. *God be thank'd, there are many among us that stand upon the Watch-Tower, and that give faithful Warning.*

|| See his Spittal-Sermon, publish'd by Order of the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen.

“ When you see the cunningest Designs baffled by small
 “ things intervening; when you see Men of profound
 “ Wisdom infatuated; — when you see the Hopes of
 “ mighty Attempters dashed into Despair, their Tri-
 “ umphs turned into Funerals, and their joyful Ex-
 “ pectations into sorrowful Disappointments; when you
 “ see the Weak, and devoted to Destruction, Victo-
 “ rious, and the most Presumptuous defeated in their
 “ Purposes: then read the Divine Dominion in the De-
 “ solation of such Devices. How often (says he) doth
 “ God take away the Heart and Spirit of grand De-
 “ signs, and burst a mighty Wheel, by snatching but
 “ one Man out of the World? *”

And this will introduce the second thing proposed.

2d, That this sudden Change has chiefly been occa-
 sion'd by the removing of one Prince from the Throne,
 and the setting up of another. This is so evident to all,
 that I have no need to set my self to the proof of it;
 but rather to observe, how the special Providence of
 God has appear'd in it.

I am far from designing to say any thing to lessen
 your Opinion of the Loss sustain'd by the Demise of
 her late Majesty, or to cast any unjust Reflections on
 her Memory: but this I would do, I would repre-
 sent some of the great Advantages we receive by the
 Happy Accession of our present Sovereign, and shew
 how seasonably the Protestant Succession has by Di-
 vine Providence took place.

Her late Majesty reign'd very Gloriously over the
British Nations for many Years; which cannot be better
 represented, than in the Words of a Right Reverend
 Prelate, who was far enough from Flattery in the
 worst of times.

“ Such, *says he*, was the Fame of her Administration of
 “ Affairs at Home; such was the Reputation of her
 “ Wisdom and Felicity in chusing Ministers; and such
 “ was then esteem'd their Faithfulness and Zeal, their
 “ Diligence and great Abilities in executing her Com-

* Charnock on the Divine Attributes, p. 745, 746.

“mands; to such a height of Military Glory did her
“great General and her Armies carry the *British*
“Name abroad; such was the Harmony and Concord
“betwixt Her and her Allies; and such was the Blessing
“of God upon all her Counsels and Undertakings;
“that I am as sure as History can make me, no Prince
“of ours was ever yet so prosperous and successful,
“so lov’d, esteem’d and honour’d by their Subjects
“and their Friends, nor near so formidable to their
“Enemies. We were, as all the World imagin’d then,
“just entering on the Ways that promis’d to lead to
“such a Peace, as would have answer’d all the Prayers
“of our Religious Queen, the Care and Vigilance of
“a most able Ministry, the Payments of a willing
“and obedient People, as well as all the glorious Toils
“and Hazards of the Soldiery: when God, for our Sins,
“permitted the Spirit of Discord to go forth——and
“to spoil for a time this beautiful and pleasing Pro-
“spect; and give us in its stead I know not what——
“Our Enemies, says he, will tell the rest with plea-
“sure.” *

The Glories of this Reign might have shin’d with the same brightness, or greater, to the end, than at the beginning, had they not been eclips’d by the evil Counsel of *Achitophel*, and the base Designs which some were carrying on, under a pretended Zeal for the Church, and Concern for the Prerogative of the Crown. And had God, as our Iniquities deserv’d, suffer’d them to have gone on a little further, and given time for their conceiv’d Mischiefs to have brought forth; what a dreadful Scene should we now have had before us? Our Civil and Religious Privileges taken away, our Goods and Estates confiscated, our Posterity left to inherit nothing but Popery and Slavery; and a Civil, but Bloody War, must have been commenced in our Nation.

But God, who has often sav’d us by his kind Providence, interpos’d yet once more in our favour: And upon the Demise of her Majesty (who herself began to

* *Bishop of St. Asaph's Preface to his Four Sermons.*

make some Change) all their Counsels are turn'd into Foolishness, and their deep-laid Designs overthrown: The Protestant Succession immediately takes place, the Regency is put into the hands of wise and faithful Ministers, and his excellent Majesty King *GEORGE* is proclaim'd thro-out the whole Kingdom with the greatest Joy and Satisfaction: The Hopes of the Pretender are intirely cut off, no foreign Power daring yet to give him any Assistance; and all *Europe* are waiting to see what great Effects will follow such an unexpected Change.

The Danger we were in, shews us how seasonably this Succession takes place; and its meeting with no opposition, tho it had so many Enemies, may convince us of that Divine Providence, which both removeth and setteth up Kings; and gives us occasion to say with the Psalmist, *The Stone which the Builders refus'd, is become the head Stone of the Corner: This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes: This is the Day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it* *.

But, 3ly, we have further to observe, That our Rulers have shewn a great degree of Wisdom and Understanding, both in providing so well for this Succession, and managing things for the publick Peace and Safety when it took place: and in this we shall find a visible Hand of the Divine Providence, as well as in the former.

Who, but he *that has the Hearts of Kings in his hand*, inspir'd our late Glorious Deliverer King *William* with such a Zeal and Concern for the Succession of the Crown in the Illustrious House of *Hannover*, and to make such early Provision for its Security; knowing that in his Reign was the properest time for the Settlement of it? And when he was under very sensible Approaches of Death, he sign'd a Bill for its better Security, making this his last and best Legacy to his People: And tho this has caus'd some to hate and calumniate him, yet it will render his Memory for ever precious to all true *Britons* and sincere Protestants.

* Psal. 118. 22, 23, 24.

Who was it also that gave that Wisdom and Understanding to our Senators, to make Laws every way so perfect and inviolable for the securing this happy Succession, that the Enemies of it, by all their Power and Craft, could find no Defect in them, or any thing to give the least occasion for their Alteration? There are especially two Clauses in those Acts, for which we have particular reason to bless God, and applaud the Wisdom then given to our Legislators: I mean, that Clause which made it High Treason for any Person either by speaking, writing, or otherwise, to attempt the altering of this Succession: And that which gave the Successor power to appoint as many Persons as he should think fit, to take the Administration of Government in his Name, and act immediately upon the Demise of her Majesty, until himself should arrive*. For by the former of these, there was no way left to make any legal Alteration during her Majesty's Life; and by the latter, whoever should be left in Places of Power at her Death, would be thereby render'd incapable of throwing things into Confusion, or doing any thing in favour of the Pretender. And as the first of these Clauses was a great Safety to us, and prevented any open Attempts against the Succession in the late Reign; so we find, to our great Joy and Satisfaction, that the latter, upon the Succession's taking place, has prov'd the happy means of a safe and quiet Settlement: for by this Method, the Regency was put into the hands of such as render'd the Minds of the People easy, a sufficient Force was immediately rais'd to defend his Majesty's Right, the Friends of Popery and the Pretender are discountenanc'd, and every thing prepar'd for a splendid and joyful Reception of our most Excellent and Rightful Sovereign.

And have we not reason, upon the review of all these things, to bless the Name of God, and say with

* *Act made in the 4th and 5th of Anne, intitled, An Act for the better securing her Majesty's Person and Government, and of the Succession to the Crown of England in the Protestant Line.*

28 *A Discourse of Divine Providence.*

the Prophet, *He giveth Wisdom to the Wise, and Knowledge to them that know Understanding?* All that now remains, is, in the

III^d and Last Place, to draw some Practical Inferences from the whole.

1st, From this Doctrine of God's being the supreme Governour of the World, and concerning himself so intimately with the Affairs of Mankind, we may infer, That Religion is our best Interest, even as to this World as well as the other.

Nothing has done more hurt to Religion, nor given Men a greater prejudice against it, than the Imagination, that it is inconvenient and hurtful to their Temporal Interest; whereas in reality it is the greatest Friend to it, and nothing can tend more to promote and secure the present Welfare either of private Persons or publick Societies.

If every Man would rightly consider his own personal Interest, he will find that he cannot serve himself better than by serving God; for Religion is not only fitted in its own nature to make us happy, but it also engages a special Providence of God in our favour. And this the Holy Scripture does abundantly testify: *O fear the Lord, ye his Saints, for there is no want to them that fear him: The young Lions do lack and suffer Hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.* And again: *What Man is he that desireth Life, and loveth many Days, that he may see good? Keep thy Tongue from Evil, and thy Lips from speaking Guile; depart from Evil, and do Good; seek Peace, and pursue it* *. And how this will be a means to obtain his desir'd Happiness, the following words declare: *The Eyes of the Lord are upon the Righteous, and his Ear is open to their Cry*; i. e. there is a special Providence of God over such a Person, by which he is preserv'd in Life, and supply'd with all good things. 'Tis most certain that God is the best Friend, and can be the worst Ene-

* Psal. 34. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

my ; and seeing he directs and governs all things below, it must be our chiefest Interest to seek his Favour, and to do those things that are well-pleasing in his sight.

Nor is Religion less advantageous to publick Bodies and Societies of Men : The Welfare and Happiness of any Nation and People cannot be better promoted than by preserving the Worship of God, and maintaining Truth and Justice amongst them. For *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People* *.

2dly, From hence we may likewise learn, that to seek to God under our Troubles, and implore his Blessing upon our Endeavours, is the wisest and best course we can take. As the Doctrine of a Divine Providence tends to promote Religion in general, so it does more particularly convince us of the Reasonableness and Necessity of Prayer. If all Power is subjected unto God, and all second Causes are under his Direction, then where can we apply ourselves better for Deliverance from Dangers, or Support under Troubles, than to this Almighty Father ? And since when we have done all we can, the Event is still in God's hand, and the Success depends on his Providence ; how reasonable is it to seek his Direction, and implore his Blessing ?

And certainly none can think it time spent in vain, or any hindrance to their Affairs, to consult the Almighty, and pray to him, before they enter upon any Enterprize. The wisest of Men recommends this Method to us, as the best way to obtain our end : *Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not to thine own Understanding. In all thy ways acknowledg him, and he shall direct thy Paths* †. This is the nearest and safest way to Success, and may contribute more to our Designs than our best Contrivances and Preparations.

God has sometimes alter'd the fixed Course of Nature, and wrought Miracles to answer the Prayers and earnest Supplications of his People : and nothing is more common in the Method of Providence, than for God to answer their Prayers, by giving them some happy Oppor-

* Prov. 14. 34.

† Prov. 3. 5, 6.

tunities; and bringing about some unexpected Changes; which have contributed more to their Prosperity and Success, than all their Power or Conduct could ever have done: *Call upon me,* says God, *in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

And I must observe to you, that if any human Means have contributed to the happy Turn given to our Affairs, and the Overthrow of those deep Designs form'd against us by our Enemies, this must be one: Many of the Righteous in this City, and through the whole Nation, were deeply affected with the Danger we were in, and ceased not to cry unto God, Night and Day, to spare *his People and bless his Heritage.* And many Societies of Christians have had their fixed Assemblies, to send up their united Supplications to Heaven, that God would preserve our Religion, our Laws, and our Liberties, and overthrow all Designs and Attempts against that Protestant Succession, which we now see so peaceably to take place. But,

3dly, If God governs the World, and super-intends all human Affairs, then this should teach us so to use the Means, and place our Expectations upon them, as still to keep our chief Hope and Dependence upon God. To cast off the use of those Means which God has appointed for certain Ends, and expect to obtain those things without them, is great Folly and Presumption: and yet to use second Causes, and so depend upon them as to have no regard to the superiour Power and Providence of God which over-rules them, is irreligious, and may properly be call'd a living without God in the World. If we would maintain Life, we must take Food to nourish us: If we would preserve Health, we must be moderate in our Enjoyments, and use Physick in proper Cases: If we would have a comfortable Subsistence for Ourselves, or Families, we must be diligent in our Callings, and improve the Opportunities that Providence puts into our hands. And yet we ought so to depend upon God, in the use of these means, as if we had done nothing, but expected all from his Favour and Blessing; knowing

knowing that he can bless and succeed the Counsels and Endeavours of Men, or blast them, and make them of no effect, as he pleases.

To expect Health and Prosperity, without using the Means God has appointed, is not Religion or Faith, but Enthusiasm : and on the contrary, to use and depend upon the Means, as if they were sufficient of themselves, and have no regard to the superiour Power and Influence of the Almighty, is not Wisdom, but Infidelity and Atheism.

4thly, This Doctrine of a Divine Providence should teach us Humility and Contentment under all the Changes and Disappointments that befall us in this Life. If we acknowledg God's Being, we must necessarily grant, that he has a Right as well as Power, to dispose of us, and all that concerns us, as he pleases : And therefore it must be most unreasonable and foolish to murmur, and be uneasy at his Government. Should we not patiently bear what God thinks fit to lay upon us ; and quietly submit to that State of Life, and those Circumstances, that he is pleased to bring us into ? This Consideration has been of great use, both to quiet the Minds of Good Men, and prevent their Murmurings under the most grievous Afflictions. *It is the Lord, says good old Eli, let him do as seemeth good unto him* *. *I was dumb, saith the Psalmist, and opened not my Mouth, because thou didst it* †.

5thly, From what has been said, it naturally follows, that the Saints and People of God must be in the most safe and happy Condition of all others. This Doctrine, that God rules the World, and directs all things by his wise and powerful Providence, may administer great Comfort to the Righteous, to all that have any Interest in his Love and Favour. Can we suppose God will neglect those that love and serve him ; and continue to protect such as daily fight against him ? Let not those that fear the Lord be cast down at the appearance of Troubles, or despair of Relief in the worst Circumstan-

* 1 Sam. 3. 18.

† Psal. 39. 9.

ces; but consider, that their heavenly Father sits at the Helm of Affairs, and has the over-ruling and direction, as well of all Persons as Things. We may therefore safely say to the Righteous, *it shall go well with him*: And conclude with the Apostle, *that all things shall work together for good, to them that love God, that are called according to his purpose.*

Lastly, What has been said, concerning the Power and Providence of God, will teach us to ascribe Honour and Praise unto him, for any Success that attends us, or any Happiness that is enjoyed by us. The Tribute of Praise is due to God, not only for our Creation and Redemption, but for the Blessings of his Providence also. If we have Health and Prosperity continued to us; if we succeed in our temporal Affairs, and increase in Honour or Riches; it is owing to a wise and good Providence of God, more than our own Conduct or Endeavours.

If any publick Changes happen in our favour, and we have such Princes set over us as seek the Happiness and Welfare of all their Subjects; if we have such wise Rulers as are able to counterwork the Designs and Plots of our Enemies, and prevent the Ruin and Desolation of a Kingdom: let us eye the superiour Hand and Power of God in all these things, and join with the Prophet in our Text, in ascribing praises to him; and say, *Blessed be the Name of God for ever and ever, for Wisdom and Might are his, and he changeth the Times and the Seasons, he removeth Kings and setteth up Kings, he giveth Wisdom to the Wise, and Knowledge to them that know Understanding.*

FINIS.

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